

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 9 and 31 as indicated below.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 Claim 1 (previously presented): A method for accelerating sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store, comprising the acts of:

3 reading a customer payment card number at a customer checkout accelerator;
4 determining a preapproval amount for the sales transaction;
5 displaying the preapproval sales transaction amount to the customer on the
6 customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;
7 transmitting the preapproval amount to an external card services system for
8 approval; and
9 storing the approval amount in a preapproval cache at a point of sales terminal
10 for use in completing the sales transaction.

1 Claim 2 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in
2 a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of transmitting the preapproval
3 amount from the customer checkout accelerator to a store controller.

1 Claim 3 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in
2 a retail store of claim 2 further comprising placing an entry in a preapproval database
3 if the external card services system approves the transaction amount.

1 Claim 4 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in
2 a retail store of claim 3 further comprising notifying a point of sales terminal of the
3 approval amount.

1 Claim 5 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in
2 a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of determining if the payment card

3 is one or more of a credit card, a debit card, a customer loyalty card, an
4 electronic/Internet wallet, or an electronic gift certificate.

1 Claim 6 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in
2 a retail store of claim 5 wherein if the payment card is a customer loyalty card,
3 determining a preapproval amount that is based on an actual purchase history for the
4 customer.

1 Claim 7 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in
2 a retail store of claim 5 wherein if the payment card is a credit or debit card,
3 determining a preapproval amount that is based on an average customer purchase
4 amount for credit and debit transactions on a store wide basis.

1 Claim 8 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in
2 a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of manually entering a specific
3 preapproval amount by the customer.

1 Claim 9 (currently amended) ~~The method for accelerating the sales transactions of~~
2 ~~customers in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the acts of:~~ A method for
3 accelerating sales transactions of customers in a retail store, comprising the acts of:
4 reading a customer payment card number at a customer checkout accelerator;
5 determining a preapproval amount for the sales transaction;
6 displaying the preapproval sales transaction amount to the customer on the
7 customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;
8 transmitting the preapproval amount to an external card services system for
9 approval;
10 storing the approval amount in a preapproval cache at a point of sales terminal
11 for use in completing the sales transaction;
12 scanning the customer payment card at a point of sales terminal;
13 determining if there is an entry for the customer in the preapproval cache; and
14 resuming the sales transaction at the point of sale terminal.

1 Claim 10 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 9 wherein the act of resuming the sales transaction comprises
3 the acts of:

4 comparing the actual sales transaction amount with the preapproval amount;
5 updating a preapproval database with the actual sales transaction amount; and
6 releasing the difference between the preapproval amount and the actual sales
7 transaction amount in the preapproval database.

1 Claim 11 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of printing a sales transaction
3 receipt and a credit or debit voucher.

1 Claim 12 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 9 wherein if there is no entry for the customer in the
3 preapproval cache, retrieving the preapproval amount from a preapproval database on
4 a store controller file server.

1 Claim 13 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 10 wherein the act of resuming the sales transaction includes
3 the acts of:

4 scanning the items selected by the customer for purchase during the sales
5 transaction;

6 determining a subtotal purchase amount after each item is scanned;

7 determining if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval amount; and

8 dynamically requesting an additional amount for approval during the sales
9 transaction, if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval amount.

1 Claim 14 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 13 further comprising the acts of:

3 transmitting an additional preapproval amount from the external card services
4 system;

5 updating the preapproval cache with the additional preapproval amount if
6 approved; and

7 notifying the operator of the point of sale terminal if the additional
8 preapproval amount is denied.

1 Claim 15 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of displaying on the customer
3 checkout accelerator a selection of special promotional merchandise that can be
4 added to the sales transaction, wherein some or all of the promotional merchandise
5 can be made available through a hyperlink to one or more Internet web sites.

1 Claim 16 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 15 further comprising the acts of:

3 creating a record of any additional items added to the sales transaction;

4 appending the additional items record to a preapproval database entry for the
5 sales transaction.

1 Claim 17 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 16 further comprising the act of reading the additional items
3 record into a sales transaction record at a point of sale terminal.

1 Claim 18 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 17 further comprising the acts of updating a vendor-based
3 tracking database to bill the vendor for displaying a vendor advertisement on the
4 customer checkout accelerator when the approval from the external card services
5 system is approved.

1 Claim 19 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the acts of:

3 configuring a selection of additional categories of items to be displayed on the
4 customer checkout accelerator based on customer preferences wherein some or all of

5 the categories of items can be made available through a hyperlink to one or more
6 Internet web sites; and

7 storing the category selections in a customer loyalty database that is
8 maintained by the retail store.

1 Claim 20 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 19 further comprising the act of displaying on the customer
3 checkout accelerator a selection of special promotional merchandise in the customer
4 selected categories that can be added to the sales transaction wherein some or all of
5 the promotional merchandise can be made available through a hyperlink to one or
6 more Internet web sites.

1 Claim 21 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 20 further comprising the acts of:

3 creating a record of any additional items added to the sales transaction;

4 appending the additional items record to a preapproval database entry for the
5 sales transaction.

1 Claim 22 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 21 further comprising the act of reading the additional items
3 record into a sales transaction record at a point of sale terminal.

1 Claim 23 (original) The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store of claim 22 further comprising the acts of updating a vendor-based
3 tracking database to bill the vendor for displaying on the customer checkout
4 accelerator a vendor advertisement for merchandise that can be made available
5 through a hyperlink to the vendor's Internet web site when the approval from the
6 external card services system is approved.

1 Claim 24 (previously presented) A computer readable medium containing a computer
2 program product for accelerating sales transactions of customers in a retail store,
3 comprising:

4 program instructions that read a customer payment card number at a customer
5 checkout accelerator;

6 program instructions that determine a preapproval amount for the sales
7 transaction;

8 program instructions that display the preapproval sales transaction amount to
9 the customer on the customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;

10 program instructions that transmit the preapproval amount to an external card
11 services system for approval; and

12 program instructions that store the approval amount in a preapproval cache at
13 a point of sales terminal for use in completing the sales transaction.

1 Claim 25 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising program
3 instructions that transmit the preapproval amount from the customer checkout
4 accelerator to a store controller.

1 Claim 26 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 25 further comprising program
3 instructions that place an entry in a preapproval database if the external card services
4 system approves the transaction amount.

1 Claim 27 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 26 further comprising program
3 instructions that notify a point of sales terminal of the approval amount.

1 Claim 28 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 27 further comprising program
3 instructions that determine if the payment card is one or more of a credit card, a debit
4 card, a customer loyalty card, an electronic/Internet wallet or an electronic gift
5 certificate.

1 Claim 29 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 28 further comprising program
3 instructions that determine a preapproval amount that is based on an actual purchase
4 history for the customer if the payment card is a customer loyalty card.

1 Claim 30 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 28, further comprising program
3 instructions that determine a preapproval amount that is based on an average
4 customer purchase amount for credit and debit transactions on a store wide basis if
5 the payment card is a credit or debit card.

1 Claim 31 (currently amended) ~~The computer program product for accelerating the~~
2 ~~sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising: A~~
3 computer readable medium containing a computer program product for accelerating
4 sales transactions of customers in a retail store, comprising:

5 program instructions that read a customer payment card number at a customer
6 checkout accelerator;

7 program instructions that determine a preapproval amount for the sales
8 transaction;

9 program instructions that display the preapproval sales transaction amount to
10 the customer on the customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;

11 program instructions that transmit the preapproval amount to an external card
12 services system for approval;

13 program instructions that store the approval amount in a preapproval cache at
14 a point of sales terminal for use in completing the sales transaction;

15 program instructions that scan the customer payment card at a point of sales
16 terminal;

17 program instructions that determine if there is an entry for the customer in the
18 preapproval cache; and

19 program instructions that resume the sales transaction at the point of sale
20 terminal.

1 Claim 32 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 31 wherein the program
3 instructions that resume the sales transaction comprise:

4 program instructions that compare the actual sales transaction amount with the
5 preapproval amount;

6 program instructions that update a preapproval database with the actual sales
7 transaction amount; and

8 program instructions that release the difference between the preapproval
9 amount and the actual sales transaction amount in the preapproval database.

1 Claim 33 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising program
3 instructions that print a sales transaction receipt and a credit or debit voucher.

1 Claim *34 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 31, further comprising program
3 instructions that retrieve the preapproval amount from a preapproval database on a
4 store controller file server if there is no entry for the customer in the preapproval
5 cache.

1 Claim 35 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 32 wherein the program
3 instructions that resume the sales transaction further include:

4 program instructions that scan the items selected by the customer for purchase
5 during the sales transaction;

6 program instructions that determine a subtotal purchase amount after each
7 item is scanned;

8 program instructions that determine if the subtotal amount exceeds the
9 preapproval amount; and

10 program instructions that dynamically request an additional amount for
11 approval during the sales transaction, if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval
12 amount.

1 Claim 36 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 35 further comprising:

3 program instructions that transmit an additional preapproval amount from the
4 external card services system;

5 program instructions that update the preapproval cache with the additional
6 preapproval amount if approved; and

7 program instructions that notify the operator of the point of sale terminal if the
8 additional preapproval amount is denied.

1 Claim 37 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising program
3 instructions that display on the customer checkout accelerator a selection of special
4 promotional merchandise that can be added to the sales transaction, wherein some or
5 all of the promotional merchandise can be made available through a hyperlink to one
6 or more Internet web sites.

1 Claim 38 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 37 further comprising:

3 program instructions that create a record of any additional items added to the
4 sales transaction;

5 program instructions that append the additional items record to a preapproval
6 database entry for the sales transaction.

1 Claim 39 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 38 further comprising program
3 instructions that read the additional items record into a sales transaction record at a
4 point of sale terminal.

1 Claim 40 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 39 further comprising program
3 instructions that update a vendor-based tracking database to bill the vendor for
4 displaying a vendor advertisement on the customer checkout accelerator for
5 merchandise that can be made available through a hyperlink to the vendor's Internet
6 web site when the approval from the external card services system is approved.

1 Claim 41 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising:

3 program instructions that configure a selection of additional categories of
4 items to be displayed on the customer checkout accelerator based on customer
5 preferences, wherein some or all of the categories of items can be made available
6 through a hyperlink to one or more Internet web sites; and

7 program instructions that store the category selections in a customer loyalty
8 database that is maintained by the retail store.

1 Claim 42 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 41 further comprising program
3 instructions that display on the customer checkout accelerator a selection of special
4 promotional merchandise in the customer selected categories that can be added to the
5 sales transaction, wherein some or all of the promotional merchandise can be made
6 available through a hyperlink to one or more Internet web sites.

1 Claim 43 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 42 further comprising:

3 program instructions that create a record of any additional items added to the
4 sales transaction;

5 program instructions that append the additional items record to a preapproval
6 database entry for the sales transaction.

1 Claim 44 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 43 further comprising program

3 instructions that read the additional items record into a sales transaction record at a
4 point of sale terminal.

1 Claim 45 (original) The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 44 further comprising program
3 instructions that update a vendor-based tracking database to bill the vendor for
4 displaying on the customer checkout accelerator a vendor advertisement for
5 merchandise that can be made available through a hyperlink to the vendor's web site
6 when the approval from the external card services system is approved.

1 Claim 46 (withdrawn) A system for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2 in a retail store, comprising:

3 a customer checkout accelerator that provides a customer user interface that is
4 used to initiate a request for a preapproval amount for a sales transaction;

5 a card reader attached to, or integrated into, the customer checkout accelerator
6 that reads a customer payment card number when the card is swiped through the card
7 reader;

8 a customer checkout accelerator server module residing on a store controller
9 server that determines a preapproval amount for the sales transaction and transmits
10 the preapproval amount to an external card services system for approval; and

11 a preapproval cache located at a point of sales terminal that stores the
12 approval amount for use in completing the sales transaction.

1 Claim 47 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 46 further comprising a preapproval database for
3 storing a record for each approved sales transaction amount.

1 Claim 48 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the preapproval database is a keyed
3 access file.

1 Claim 49 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the preapproval database is a relational
3 database.

1 Claim 50 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 46 further comprising a graphical user interface
3 (GUI) that receives customer input from a terminal sales application and displays the
4 customer input in a full screen display of the customer checkout accelerator.

1 Claim 51 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator
3 server module contains processing logic that provides interfaces between a plurality
4 of operational customer checkout accelerators in the retail store and credit or debit
5 card service providers for payment authorization.

1 Claim 52 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the customer checkout accelerator
3 server module contains processing logic that provides interfaces between a plurality
4 of terminal sales applications, each operating on a point sales terminal, and the
5 preapproval database.

1 Claim 53 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the customer checkout accelerator
3 server module contains processing logic that provides access to the preapproval
4 database.

1 Claim 54 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator
3 server module contains processing logic that sends payment approval amount
4 information to a terminal sales application at a point of sales terminal for caching in a
5 preapproval cache.

1 Claim 55 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator
3 server module contains processing logic that maintains and updates the preapproval
4 cache and a preapproval database.

1 Claim 56 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator
3 server module contains processing logic that updates and maintains a vendor tracking
4 database to bill a vendor for displaying on the customer checkout accelerator a vendor
5 advertisement for merchandise that can be made available through a hyperlink to the
6 vendor's Internet web site.

1 Claim 57 (withdrawn) The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2 customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator
3 server module contains processing logic that displays either store-configured or
4 customer-configured hyperlinks to Internet web sites for the purchase of additional
5 items in a checkout lane.